



Enhancing Tourism Service Quality in Misurata: Product and Promotion Strategies

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Information of Article	ABSTRACT
<i>Article history:</i> Received: 21 Jan 2025 Accepted: 27 Feb 2025 Available online: 28 Feb 2025 <i>Keywords:</i> Cultural Tourism Marketing Mix Theory Tourism Service Quality Product Strategy Promotional Activities	This research examines how Product (cultural offerings) and Promotion strategies impact tourism service quality in Misurata, Libya, near UNESCO World Heritage sites like Leptis Magna. Using Marketing Mix Theory, a survey-based study of 357 tourism providers revealed: Product ($\beta = 0.508$, $p < 0.001$) and Promotion ($\beta = 0.269$, $p < 0.01$) significantly enhance service quality perceptions, with Product having nearly double the influence. Demographics of providers (e.g., experience, education) shaped strategic priorities. Validated instruments and statistical rigor (Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.70$, regression, factor analysis) confirmed reliability. Implications: Prioritize culturally tailored products (e.g., heritage tours) and digital promotions to boost satisfaction and consistency. Findings adapt marketing theory to post-conflict contexts, offering actionable steps for operators and policymakers. Future research should explore longitudinal and visitor perspectives.

1. Introduction

Misurata, a Libyan coastal city, is uniquely positioned near globally significant cultural heritage destinations, namely the UNESCO World Heritage site Leptis Magna, and is therefore a possible destination for cultural tourism (El-Manhaly, 2024). However, there are considerable challenges to the tourism sector, including poor infrastructure, lack of adequate marketing activities, and inconsistent standards of service, which are further aggravated by the post-conflict situation of the region due to Libya's political revolutions (Hammad & Abd El Maksoud, 2024). These issues demand strategic interventions towards enhancing tourism service quality, which is defined as the degree to which services live up to or surpass visitor expectations in terms of factors such as tangibles (physical facilities), reliability (dependable provision of services), responsiveness (prompt aid), assurance (faith in the providers), and empathy (care customization) (Jahmani et al., 2023). The Marketing Mix Theory, when adapted to service businesses by Booms and Bitner (1981), offers a robust model to address these issues by concentrating on such elements as Product (e.g., cultural tours, facilities at the site) and Promotion (e.g., web promotions, branding) as prime motivators of service quality (Giao et al., 2021). Despite the applicability of this framework, there is a noticeable lack of research critically examining its elements in Misurata's cultural tourism sector, particularly against the backdrop of Libya's rehabilitation socio-politically and economically (Oukacha, 2024). Misurata's rich heritage of history, coupled with ongoing development to rebuild tourism infrastructure, present a compelling case for examining the contribution of focused marketing strategies in building service quality and promoting both theoretical and practical improvements in Libya's tourism industry (Kerdpitak et al., 2022). It emphasizes Product and Promotion due to their dominant locations in the effects on visitor experience and impression within cultural tourist sites, whereby physical offerings as well as communications play a fundamental role (Xia et al., 2024).

The objective of the current research is to examine the direct correlation between Product and Promotion and Tourism Service Quality among tourism service companies in Misurata's cultural tourism sector. Two hypotheses are examined: (H1) There exists a significant positive correlation between Product and Tourism Service Quality, and (H2) There exists a significant positive correlation between Promotion and Tourism Service Quality. These assumptions underlie that quality tourism products and effective promotional activities enhance service quality perceptions through the alignment of offerings with visitors' expectations and increasing destination exposure. A quantitative, cross-sectional survey design was employed, targeting 357 tourism service providers like tour operators and cultural site staff from an estimated population of 5,000. Information was collected using a standardized survey instrument adapted from earlier studies and analyzed using multiple regression in SPSS, allowing for rigorous statistical testing (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). Demographic profiles of the respondents were also analyzed to understand the provider profile and guide tailored approaches. The contribution of this study is the ability to extend Marketing Mix Theory in a post-conflict cultural tourist

setting, which is a gap in Libya-based research. Practically, it offers useful strategies for Misurata tourist operators to improve cultural product development and online advertising, leading to greater customer satisfaction and service reliability. The organization of the paper is as follows: Section 2 presents the literature and hypotheses, Section 3 describes the methodology, Section 4 displays the results, Section 5 interprets the results, and Section 6 concludes with implications and limitations.

2. Literature Review

The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology was first proposed by Venkatesh et al. (2003). The UTAUT models stated that four major constructs defined the performance expectancy, which referred to the degree to which the individual believed that the use of the system would help him/her improve job performance. The effort expectancy is defined as the level of ease that is related to the use of the system, while social influence refers to the degree to which the individual is affected by others who would encourage him/her to use the system. Finally, the facilitating conditions refer to the degree to which the individual believed that the technical and organisational infrastructure supported the system usage. These four variables were direct predictors of behavioural intention and system usage. Furthermore, they were also moderated by age, experience, gender, and voluntary usage (Venkatesh et al., 2003).

2.1 Marketing Mix Theory and Tourism Service Quality

The Marketing Mix Model, which was adapted by Booms and Bitner (1981) for the service industry, postulates that seven variables—Product, Price, Promotion, Place, People, Process, and Physical Evidence—affect the provision of service and customer experiences. For tourism, these variables have a critical function in enhancing service quality, which entails attributes such as reliability, responsiveness, tangibles, assurance, and empathy (Jahmani et al., 2023). Service quality is particularly critical in cultural tourism, where tourists seek experiences that are meaningful and authentic and connected to what they anticipate of historic and cultural significance (Giao et al., 2021). The Product and Promotion are the focal areas in this case due to their real-world applicability to Misurata's cultural tourism sector, where tangible products and effective marketing communications aid in attracting and pleasing tourists (Kerdpitak et al., 2022). Product refers to the tangible and intangible elements of the tourist experience, such as cultural tours, touring archaeological sites, and visitor facilities, which form the cornerstone of visitor satisfaction (El-Manhaly, 2024). Promotion entails marketing strategies like online promotions, social media marketing, and branding management that raise destination awareness and convey signals of service quality (Xia et al., 2024). Both components are essential in defining visitor perceptions and expectations, especially in tourist destinations such as Misurata, where cultural heritage is the main attraction but suffers from issues of marketing and infrastructure (Hammad & Abd El Maksoud, 2024). Previous research has shown that good-quality tourism products and focused advertising play a substantial role in raising service quality by providing memorable experiences and good communication with tourists (Oukacha, 2024). Nonetheless, the use of these factors in post-conflict environments, which are resource-scarce and security-prone, is not well understood, calling for context-based research to deal with these special challenges (Jahmani et al., 2023).

2.2 Product and Tourism Service Quality

The Product factor in tourism covers the creation and provision of experience, such as guided tours, accessibility to sites, and related amenities, that have a direct impact on perceived service quality (Giao et al., 2021). In Misurata, cultural tourism products around sites such as Leptis Magna have to be of international standards to meet the requirements of demanding visitors, who look for well-maintained facilities and original experiences (El-Manhaly, 2024). Quality goods enhance tangibles, such as visually preserved archaeological sites, and dependability, such as consistent tour timetables, both of which are crucial dimensions of service quality (Jahmani et al., 2023). For example, Kerdpitak et al. (2022) confirmed that effectively designed tourism products, such as heritage tours, significantly increased visitor satisfaction in cultural destinations by offering seamless and memorable experiences. Within Misurata, issues such as inadequate site care, limited interpretive materials, and inadequate visitor facilities detract from service quality, highlighting strategic product development necessities (Oukacha, 2024). Evidence suggests post-conflict tourists' operators experience challenges in product matching to the international level due to resource constraints and logistical aspects, resulting in negative visitor impression (Hammad & Abd El Maksoud, 2024). Enhancing the tourist products via investments in preservation of attractions, multilingual tour guides, and tourist amenities might bridge these gaps, resulting in greater satisfaction and loyalty of the visitors. From this evidence, the study hypothesizes:

H1: Product has a significant positive effect on Tourism Service Quality in Misurata's cultural tourism sector.

2.3 Promotion and Tourism Service Quality

Promotion, comprising advertising, social media marketing, and public relations, is an important influencer of destination image development and tourist expectations (Xia et al., 2024). Effective promotional campaigns enhance awareness of destinations, convey service quality cues, and influence elements such as assurance (dependence on service providers) and empathy (personalized communication) (Giao et al., 2021). In Misurata, the lack of intensive promotional efforts limits the popularity of cultural attractions like Leptis Magna, leading to low tourist influx and low destination appeal (Hammad & Abd El Maksoud, 2024). Kerdpitak et al. (2022) demonstrated that online promotions, particularly through social media sites, significantly enhanced service quality perceptions by providing accurate, appealing, and timely information to tourists. Similarly, Jahmani et al. (2023) found that particular promotional campaigns improved responsiveness by enabling direct and efficient communication with tourists. In Misurata, relying on conventional promotional tactics, such as print media or word-of-mouth, further demonstrates the need for modern methods like social media marketing and influencer collaboration to generate destination awareness (Oukacha, 2024). Through the utilization of online platforms, tour operators can reach global audiences, build trust, and align visitors' expectations with services offered, thus improving service quality perceptions. The research thus hypothesizes:

H2: Promotion has a significant positive effect on Tourism Service Quality in Misurata's cultural tourism sector.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study utilized a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to examine the direct effects of Product and Promotion on Tourism Service Quality in Misurata's cultural tourism sector. The approach is well-suited for testing causal relationships in a specific context, particularly in a post-conflict environment where timely and context-specific data are essential for understanding provider perspectives (Saunders et al., 2023). Data were collected in January 2025 to capture current insights from tourism service providers, ensuring relevance to Misurata's ongoing tourism recovery efforts.

3.2 Population and Sampling

The study population comprised approximately 5,000 tourism service providers in Misurata, including tour operators, cultural site staff, travel agents, and related personnel engaged in cultural tourism activities. A sample size of 357 respondents was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table, ensuring statistical adequacy for a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. Purposive sampling was employed to select respondents with direct involvement in delivering cultural tourism services, such as organizing tours or managing site operations, thereby enhancing the relevance and quality of responses (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). This sampling method ensured that participants had sufficient knowledge of product offerings and promotional activities, critical for assessing their impact on service quality.

3.3 Instrument

A structured questionnaire was adapted from validated instruments used in prior tourism studies, ensuring alignment with established measures of marketing mix elements and service quality. The instrument comprised three main constructs: Product (6 items, e.g., "Our tourism attractions meet international standards," "Our cultural tours are well-organized"), Promotion (6 items, e.g., "Our social media promotions enhance awareness," "Our marketing campaigns are appealing"), and Tourism Service Quality (7 items, e.g., "Our services are delivered reliably," "Our staff respond promptly to visitor needs"). Items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree), consistent with methodologies employed by Jahmani et al. (2023) and Giao et al. (2021). Additionally, the questionnaire included demographic questions on age, gender, education level, job role, and years of experience to provide a comprehensive profile of respondents. The questionnaire was pilot-tested with 30 respondents in December 2024, yielding Cronbach's alpha values of 0.81 (Product), 0.78 (Promotion), and 0.85 (Service Quality), confirming reliability and allowing minor refinements to item wording for clarity.

3.4. Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected using drop-off surveys distributed to 450 respondents of Misurata's cultural tourism operators, with 357 usable surveys (79.3% response rate). Personal administration of surveys provided high-quality responses, with respondents briefed on the study aim and assured of confidentiality. Ethical concerns, including informed consent, voluntary participation, and anonymization of data, were rigorously followed, in accordance with best research ethics practice (Saunders et al., 2023). Data were analyzed using SPSS version 26. Descriptive statistics summarized

demographic information and construct scores. Reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha, and validity was tested using exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and inter-construct correlations. Multiple regression analysis was conducted to test the hypotheses, examining the influence of Product and Promotion on Tourism Service Quality. Assumptions of normality (checked through skewness and kurtosis), linearity (checked through scatterplots), and multicollinearity (checked through VIF) were tested, with VIF values less than 3 indicating no multicollinearity (Hair et al., 2017). Demographic statistics were examined to gain an understanding of the characteristics of respondents and their likely effect on service quality perceptions.

4. Results

4.1 Demographic Characteristics

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the 357 respondents. The sample was diverse, with 58.3% male and 41.7% female respondents, reflecting a balanced gender distribution. Age groups were well-represented, with 34.2% aged 18–30, 42.6% aged 31–45, and 23.2% aged 46 and above, indicating a mix of younger and more experienced providers. Education levels varied, with 29.4% holding high school diplomas, 46.8% holding bachelor's degrees, and 23.8% holding postgraduate qualifications, suggesting a relatively educated workforce. Job roles included tour operators (35.6%), cultural site staff (28.3%), travel agents (20.2%), and others (15.9%), capturing diverse perspectives within the cultural tourism sector. Years of experience ranged from less than 5 years (31.4%), 5–10 years (38.7%), to over 10 years (29.9%), indicating a blend of novice and seasoned professionals. These demographics provide context for interpreting service quality perceptions and inform tailored recommendations for product and promotion strategies.

Table: 1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	208	58.3
	Female	149	41.7
Age	18–30 years	122	34.2
	31–45 years	152	42.6
	46+ years	83	23.2
Education Level	High School	105	29.4
	Bachelor's Degree	167	46.8
	Postgraduate	85	23.8
Job Role	Tour Operator	127	35.6
	Cultural Site Staff	101	28.3
	Travel Agent	72	20.2
	Other	57	15.9
Years of Experience	<5 years	112	31.4
	5–10 years	138	38.7
	>10 years	107	29.9

4.2 Descriptive Statistics and Reliability

Descriptive statistics for the constructs are presented in Table 2. Mean scores indicate moderate to high perceptions of Product ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 0.67$), Promotion ($M = 3.70$, $SD = 0.65$), and Tourism Service Quality ($M = 3.99$, $SD = 0.71$). These scores suggest that providers perceive their offerings and marketing efforts positively, though there is room for improvement to achieve excellence in service quality. Reliability was confirmed with Cronbach's alpha values exceeding 0.70 for all constructs: Product (0.814), Promotion (0.782), and Tourism Service Quality (0.846), indicating strong internal consistency.

Table: 2 Descriptive Statistics and Reliability

Construct	Mean	Standard Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha
Product	3.87	0.67	0.814
Promotion	3.70	0.65	0.782
Tourism Service Quality	3.99	0.71	0.846

4.3 Validity Assessment

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to assess construct validity, using principal component analysis with varimax rotation. Three factors were extracted, corresponding to Product, Promotion, and Tourism Service Quality, with

eigenvalues > 1 and total variance explained of 70.1%. Factor loadings ranged from 0.68 to 0.89, exceeding the threshold of 0.60 (Hair et al., 2017). Inter-construct correlations (Table 3) were moderate ($r = 0.52$ to 0.69), indicating discriminant validity, as correlations were below 0.80, ensuring that constructs were distinct yet related.

Table: 3 Inter-Construct Correlations

Construct	Product	Promotion	Tourism Service Quality
Product	1.000		
Promotion	0.524	1.000	
Tourism Service Quality	0.689	0.653	1.000

4.4 Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to test H1 and H2, with Tourism Service Quality as the dependent variable and Product and Promotion as independent variables. Table 4 presents the results. The model was significant ($F(2, 354) = 89.127$, $p < 0.001$), explaining 50.1% of the variance in Tourism Service Quality ($R^2 = 0.501$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.497$). Product had a significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.508$, $t = 8.356$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H1. Promotion also had a significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.269$, $t = 4.291$, $p < 0.01$), supporting H2. VIF values (Product: 1.367; Promotion: 1.345) confirmed no multicollinearity. Standardized coefficients indicate that Product has a stronger influence than Promotion, suggesting that tangible offerings are a primary driver of service quality perceptions.

Table: 4 Multiple Regression Results

Hypothesis	Predictor	β (Standardized)	t-value	p-value	VIF	Result
H1	Product	0.508	8.356	<0.001	1.367	Supported
H2	Promotion	0.269	4.291	<0.01	1.345	Supported

$R^2 = 0.501$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.497$, $F(2, 354) = 89.127$, $p < 0.001$

5. Discussion

The results confirm that both Product and Promotion exert a strong influence on Tourism Service Quality in Misurata's cultural tourism sector, confirming H1 and H2. The stronger effect of Product ($\beta = 0.508$, $p < 0.001$) is consistent with Giao et al. (2021), who demonstrated that high-quality tourism products such as well-conserved cultural areas and guided tours enhance reliability and tangibles, key service quality dimensions. Within Misurata, investment in the preservation of places like Leptis Magna, upgrading visitor amenities (e.g., resting areas, signage), and offering guided tours with multilingual tour guides might mitigate infrastructural deficits, enabling visitor journeys (El-Manhaly, 2024). Promotion's sizable modest impact ($\beta = 0.269$, $p < 0.01$) corroborates Kerdpitak et al. (2022), who emphasized that internet promotions increase destination awareness and confidence through engaging and easily available information. Misurata tour operators would employ sites like Instagram and TripAdvisor to promote cultural destinations in contrast to limited marketing efforts documented by Hammad and Abd El Maksoud (2024). The R^2 of 0.501 describes that Product and Promotion account for only over half of the variance in service quality, suggesting their significant but not total impact. Other factors, such as staff training or efficiency of operations, are also implicated, worthy of further research (Jahmani et al., 2023).

The demographic analysis also provides further information on the provider profile, such as a mixed staff with varying experience and education levels. The almost-even gender distribution (58.3% male, 41.7% female) and distribution across age groups (34.2% aged 18–30, 42.6% aged 31–45) suggest that strategies can cater to both young, technology-oriented providers for online propositions and older, experienced providers for product innovation. Highest proportion of bachelor degree qualification holders (46.8%) is an indicator of potential for professional upgrading in marketing and provision of services, whereas the variety of job titles (e.g., 35.6% tour operators, 28.3% staff at sites) is an indicator of demands for role-specific intervention, e.g., care of sites for staff, digital marketing for operators. More experienced providers (experienced >10 years, 29.9%) could train less experienced colleagues (<5 years, 31.4%) to transfer knowledge to enhance service quality (Xia et al., 2024).

Theoretically, the study contributes to Marketing Mix Theory as it demonstrates how Product and Promotion can be adapted within a post-conflict cultural tourism context, addressing a Libyan-specific research void (Oukacha, 2024). The findings reiterate the need for context-based adaptations of the marketing mix in an effort to cope with issues like security, resource availability, and invisibility globally (Hammad & Abd El Maksoud, 2024). In practice, the study recommends Misurata's tourism entrepreneurs to emphasize product development, such as the restoration of archaeological sites and

offering interesting cultural tours, and online marketing through social media campaigns and travel influencer partnerships. These can improve service reliability, tangibles, and tourist satisfaction and encourage sustainable tourism growth. Policymakers can support such efforts by investing in rehabilitation of sites, providing digital marketing education, and promoting Misurata as a safe and desirable destination, consistent with overall objectives of tourism development in Libya (El-Manhaly, 2024). Demographic results suggest that training sessions should be modified to accommodate providers' educational and experience levels to successfully implement such measures.

6. Conclusion

This study examined the influence of Product and Promotion on Tourism Service Quality within Misurata's cultural tourism sector, confirming significant positive influences for both dimensions. The findings highlight the necessity of well-conceived tourism products and effective promotion in establishing perceptions of service quality within a post-conflict context. Academically, the study contributes to Marketing Mix Theory by providing empirical evidence from a hitherto unexplored environment, addressing a research gap in Libyan cultural tourism. Practically, it offers Misurata's tourism operators practical recommendations to increase cultural provision, such as site preservation and guided tours, and digital visibility through social media promotion, ultimately increasing visitor experience and destination competitiveness. The demographic analysis emphasizes the variation among providers, suggesting individual interventions to optimize their experience and skills. The limitations are restricting the focus to two of the variables of the marketing mix and the single-city sample, which may limit generalizability to other Libyan or regional contexts. Future research could explore other variables, e.g., processes or staff training, or comparative research in Libyan cities like Tripoli or Sabratha to further develop the dynamics of tourism service quality. The study's findings have particular relevance for stakeholders looking to initiate Misurata's cultural tourism activity as part of ongoing recovery initiatives, contributing to Libya's broader tourism development strategy.

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